

The State of the State – Expecting More

Speaker Schwartzkopf, President Blevins, members of the 148th General Assembly, other elected officials, members of the Cabinet, members of the Judiciary, Carla, the people of Delaware. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

One of the most rewarding parts of this job is the constant reminder of the remarkable talents and character of Delawareans. That includes the thousands of state employees who provide outstanding service – at hospitals, in schools and on roads, preserving natural resources, and protecting our safety. For the last seven years, I have had the privilege of serving among some of the most dedicated public servants in America. I thank all of the employees who make Delaware better.

It's hard for me to believe that this is the eighth time I've had the honor of delivering the State of the State address. It is also my last. So today, I want to reflect on how far we've come together and set out a vision not only for the last year of my Administration, but also to ensure Delaware's success for generations to come.

When I first stood before you, we faced a collapsing national economy and a growing deficit at a time of rapidly increasing demand for public services. As a result of the recession, more than five percent of Delaware's jobs vanished.

That was an awful time. So many of our neighbors were hurting badly.

So we all got to work, improving our business climate and making difficult decisions to balance our budgets just as many Delawareans have had to do for their own. And we've done so while protecting the most vulnerable among us.

When we reflect on the challenges we have faced, we can be proud that even in the wake of the great recession, we did not settle for a return to the status quo.

As major employers closed their doors and shrinking state revenues put pressure on services, some were tempted to figure out how we could turn back the clock – if only we could just recreate the same jobs that were lost, or if only we could fund the same services in the same way. But going back was never an option.

The challenges we faced weren't just the result of a temporary economic downturn, but of a changing world, with an economy forever altered by global competition and new technology.

As the path for Delawareans to achieve the American Dream has changed, our people have risen to the occasion.

Businesses have found new global markets – like Solar Unlimited, a new exporter of hot water heating systems from Lewes projecting \$1 million in sales to Mexico thanks to the state’s export initiatives.

Workers have invested hundreds of hours in job training to learn skills for a more promising career.

Students have become the first in their families to attend and complete college.

Dawn Milnamow symbolizes the progress that’s possible when we raise expectations for the work we do and create the types of opportunities Delawareans deserve. Less than six months ago, Dawn struggled to land a full-time job. But she never lacked the resolve and work ethic required to reach her goals. Last month, she took an IT job at JP Morgan Chase, which nearly tripled her salary to around \$70,000. Let’s congratulate her.

They hired Dawn because she completed an intense 12-week computer coding course at Zip Code Wilmington – a program that was created by local business leaders, led by Ben DuPont, as part of our TechHire initiative.

The hard work and the ultimate achievement came from Dawn, but TechHire provided the opening for her to meet her own expectations for a better life. It is our responsibility to provide Delawareans with the bridge to the life they want -- workforce training for people who want to upgrade their skills; education that aligns with the knowledge they need in the new economy; affordable and high quality health care, safe communities, and more responsive government that supports their drive to succeed.

We have a lot more to do and new adversities to conquer. But our progress demonstrates that we are up to the challenge.

Last year, I told you we had not only recovered jobs lost in the recession, but more Delawareans were working than ever before. Since then, an additional 13,700 Delawareans have found jobs.

Since the national economy bottomed out, Delaware’s job growth of 13 percent has outpaced all of our neighboring states, adding more than 50,000 jobs.

For the first time in seven years, the number of job openings in the Department of Labor’s database is well over double the number of people looking for work.

At a time when participation in the workforce has shrunk nationally, Delaware’s participation rate has grown fastest in the country in the past two years.

And thanks to bipartisan compromise spearheaded by Speaker Schwartzkopf and President Blevins last year, along with Senators Simpson and Lavelle, we’re putting our construction

workers back on the job by investing an additional \$400 million in our roads and bridges over the next six years.

More students are graduating from our high schools – the best improvement of any state.

And many more of them have already earned college credit.

More veterans are finding jobs while fewer are living on the streets.

And we're helping more people with disabilities enter the workforce rather than rely solely on public assistance.

The air we breathe is cleaner; recreational and cultural opportunities are more plentiful. We have vast new trails and record investments in our libraries and arts community. A small state investment in downtown areas in every county is leading to more than \$100 million dollars in private investment.

Our prisons are less crowded. We are finding more effective ways to reduce recidivism.

And we have taken historic steps toward equality for our vibrant LGBT community.

Looking back, it's easy to think we were always on this path. But seven years ago, we had no guarantees about the progress we would make, and certainly no guarantees that we would lead the region in job growth, lead all states in graduation growth rates, and transform opportunities for so many Delawareans. We could only have accomplished all of this by committing to do more than just reversing the tide of the recession – more than just hoping for a return to the past.

Today, the state of our state is stronger than it has been in years. Now, together let's make it stronger for generations to come.

We help grow our economy by improving access to better education and training. Even as employment in our state has reached historic highs, we confront the odd reality that Delaware employers are hiring, but can't find enough qualified applicants. This is frustrating because we know that many Delawareans can do the work. They are underemployed workers who have the ability to excel in construction, coding or health-care, first generation college students, ex-offenders, and people with disabilities. They want to work but don't have the right skills. We can help change that.

With leadership from Secretary McMahon, we have made significant progress, but I'm determined that we will expand opportunities for all Delawareans – like TechHire helped connect Dawn to JP Morgan Chase.

TechHire is part of our commitment to the Delaware Promise that I announced last year. By 2025, the percentage of Delawareans with a college degree or professional certificate will match the percentage of our jobs that will require one – 65 percent.

We are keeping that promise by expanding TechHire beyond ZipCode Wilmington and adding a new coding program at Delaware Tech, geared toward people who need to work part-time while they train.

This fall, thanks to our Pathways to Prosperity initiative, we will keep our promise to more than 5000 students in 29 high schools. Only two years ago, this was just one program for a couple dozen students. Now, we've launched ten pathways, from manufacturing to computer networking to health care and culinary arts.

Many students in that program have the opportunity to work directly at Delaware employers. Today I'm announcing that our business partners have agreed to double the number from 500 to 1000 students.

We're also putting a special focus on our growing IT sector. Through our computer science pathway and other high level courses, we've increased the number of high school students studying computer programming from about 80 to 560 in just the last two years. Our goal is 1,000 students by September.

And I'm pleased to unveil new pathways, including one to serve our robust agriculture and food production industries.

We're keeping the Delaware Promise to young adults like Cheyenne Hinson, who recently became a certified nursing assistant thanks to an eight-week course for unemployed and under-employed youth. Our partnership with the McKinsey Social Initiative, Delaware Tech, Jobs for Delaware Graduates, and employers has meant decent pay and the opportunity to thrive in the health care industry for Delawareans who previously didn't have more than a high school diploma or GED. Cheyenne was unemployed a year ago. Now she works at Cadia and recently received a promotion.

We are expanding the health care program this year and we're adding additional industries, including retail and hospitality. We will serve more than 200 young people this year.

One way we already lead the nation in keeping our promise is through our SEED and Inspire scholarships. Because of the forward-thinking leadership of Senator McDowell and others who began these efforts a decade ago, nearly 20,000 Delawareans have received full scholarships toward degrees at Delaware Tech, UD, and Delaware State.

But we can do better. Some students who need these scholarships the most can't access them, despite meeting academic requirements, because current rules mandate that they attend

school full-time and without interruption. But where does that leave the aspiring students who are caring for young children or elderly parents, or are working to support their families?

Alisson Murillo Navas enrolled at Delaware Tech this fall to pursue biological sciences. She had to hold down a part-time job to make ends meet. Despite earning good grades, she lost her scholarship because her job commitments left her one credit short. Students like Alisson shouldn't lose out on the brighter futures they want for themselves and their loved ones. So I ask the General Assembly to make these scholarships more universal by expanding their benefits to part-time students and those who must take a break from their studies.

We keep our promise when we recognize the abilities of all Delawareans to contribute. Building on the "Employment First" efforts of Representatives Heffernan and Smith, I'm pleased to report that we've made real progress in supporting people with different types of abilities -- like Briana Congo, who participated in our Project Search partnership with Red Clay and Christiana Care. After an internship, Christiana hired her. Because of people like Briana, when it comes to helping those youth who receive disability benefits get a job, Delaware not only puts employment first -- we rank first in the nation.

Our strong workforce is the most important reason employers locate and expand in our state -- from JP Morgan Chase's historic announcement of 1800 jobs in Wilmington to the decisions to open new plants in Newark and Dover by overseas companies like AB Packaging and floor manufacturer Uzin Utz.

But we also know that our employers and entrepreneurs expect Delaware to be an affordable, welcoming place to do business. That's why, with the support of Senators Hocker and Marshall, we have taken major steps to ease regulatory burdens. We've invested in broadband deployment in southern Delaware and increased access to capital for hundreds of startups and small companies -- but we can do more.

With leadership from Congressman John Carney, Congress has given states the flexibility to permit citizens to more easily invest in startups. Much of this investing can be done through what is known as crowdfunding -- a way for entrepreneurs to connect with investors. Through crowdfunding, companies raise billions of dollars and this year the amount of investment is expected to exceed the funding provided through traditional sources like venture capital. But our laws prevent our citizens from using crowdfunding to its full potential to help Delaware businesses.

I ask the General Assembly to pass legislation that helps small businesses use online platforms to offer a stake in their companies to Delawareans.

To further support entrepreneurship, I'm pleased to announce that Factory Berlin, Europe's largest start-up incubator, has chosen our State as its first United States location. Here in

Delaware they will nurture local entrepreneurs as well as help launch promising German startups into the U.S. market.

It's also time for us to modernize our tax code to promote job creation. I applaud the House of Representatives for passing the Delaware Competes Act, which recognizes that we must change our corporate income tax laws so that Delaware is more competitive – and so that companies have a bigger incentive to expand in our state. Thank you Representatives Longhurst and Danny Short for your work on this issue. And I'm grateful to Senators Blevins, McBride, Simpson, and Lavelle for your leadership in bringing this to the Senate floor.

While the recession is over and our state's economy is growing, we are all well aware that recent announcements by DuPont have increased the challenges that lie ahead. We have long known that DuPont is changing, but that's no solace to our friends and neighbors affected by the company's significant cuts.

For centuries, DuPont has been a key reason Delaware has been a hotbed of innovation – a leader among the states when it comes to patents and Ph.D.'s.

DuPont may be a lot smaller than it once was, but we must ensure that Delaware remains a place where innovation, research, and development is just part of our fabric. I am grateful to the Delaware employers who have reached out to hire Delawareans let go by DuPont and I'm excited to hear from DuPonters who want to start their own new stories of innovation right here in Delaware.

I appreciate our partners at the University of Delaware, Delaware State and Delaware Tech who are working with us to develop a plan to give scientists and others who have worked at DuPont access to lab space, new research opportunities, and start-up capital.

By building a skilled workforce and fostering innovation, we're creating good jobs for our children and the generations to come.

Just as we need regulatory and tax policies that make job growth sustainable, our state's finances must be sustainable and responsible.

The good news is because of the work we have done over the last seven years, we are still one of a small minority of states with a AAA credit rating. We have reduced headcount in executive branch agencies by nearly 5 percent. We've saved millions by changing the way we purchase energy, and we've renegotiated real estate leases. The list goes on.

The biggest challenge we face is the sharply accelerating cost of health care.

Rising expenses affect all Delaware businesses as well as taxpayers who fund Medicaid and health care for state employees and retirees.

Large employers, small business owners, hospitals, physicians, and behavioral health specialists have spent thousands of hours on plans to move away from an expensive fee-for-service model and toward a system that emphasizes quality outcomes at an affordable cost. While this transition will not happen overnight, it is essential to achieve the health results Delawareans deserve at a price that we can all afford.

For state employee health plans, spending has risen almost 50 percent since the start of the decade. If nothing changes by the end of the decade, it will double to \$1 billion. And we have already depleted our \$71 million reserve for these plans.

This trend is not sustainable for taxpayers. And skyrocketing costs mean we can't be sure that we can afford the coverage employees expect.

Nearly doubling the money we spend on healthcare also means hundreds of millions of dollars that we can no longer invest in improving our schools, protecting our environment, making our neighborhoods safer, and continuing to raise the quality of life across our state.

I will propose changes to improve the long-term viability of our health care plans, while ensuring state workers have access to high quality care.

Today's system does virtually nothing to help people focus on costs, so we'll give employees the information and better incentives to choose cost-effective, high quality care – like using urgent care instead of the emergency room or telemedicine instead of an office visit. We will also create a new plan for future employees in order to limit changes for current employees.

We have no better example of how higher expectations – along with significant additional resources, support, and innovation – have resulted in extraordinary progress than in our schools.

Over the past several years, our students, families, teachers, and staff have set and reached loftier goals in almost every possible way. And the more we have asked, the more they have achieved, like record high graduation rates – improving faster than any other state – and some of the nation's best test scores in the early grades.

We have made more rigorous courses available. Delaware students are taking and passing 1,000 more AP exams than four years ago.

Last week I visited Polytech High School to showcase an increase in just two years from 800 to 2700 in attendance of high school students in college classes.

Less than four years after we started our world language immersion program, more than 2,300 elementary students are on track to be proficient in Chinese or Spanish, gaining an amazing advantage in our global economy.

The past two years, all of Delaware's college-ready students have applied and been accepted to college. Virtually all have enrolled. Previously, as many as one in five had not.

We reached all of these goals because of the incredible impact Delaware educators have every day – collaborating on effective lesson plans, providing help after school, believing in their students. Let's thank them.

We have a responsibility to ensure that the best and brightest enter teaching, and get the support they need once they arrive in the classroom.

Several years ago, we made progress together when, with the support of DSEA, we raised the bar for entering the teaching profession. But when I signed Senate Bill 51, I made a promise – that higher expectations would come with a better compensation system.

I am grateful to the Committee to Advance Teacher Compensation and Careers that has met for more than a year to develop recommendations, and for the input of hundreds of teachers and administrators. Thank you Senators Sokola and Pettyjohn, and Representatives Williams and Kenton for all of your hard work. This process is still ongoing but the issue deserves meaningful progress sooner rather than later.

That's why my budget will include funding to raise starting salaries to be more competitive with our neighbors. And we will pilot opportunities for educators to earn more for taking on leadership responsibilities, without leaving the classroom for administrative positions. I will also propose stipends for educators who aren't receiving compensation for their National Board Certification.

I ask the General Assembly to support these investments to better attract, retain, and support current and prospective educators, because one of the best things we can do to ensure the prosperity of the generations to follow, is to ensure our children have great teachers today.

As much as any other state, Delaware has committed to our youngest learners. In 2011, only five percent of low-income kids attended the most highly rated programs. Today, we've increased that number to 59 percent.

Given the scientific evidence about the critical brain development that occurs in their first few years, that means thousands of Delaware children will have better opportunities to succeed at every stage of life.

But we shouldn't be satisfied until every child has access to one of these programs. I ask the General Assembly to support my budget request to give more low-income children access to high-quality early learning programs, well-educated teachers, and a healthy start.

We all know that education is the great equalizer – providing the ladder from poverty to opportunity, separating the citizen from the inmate, distinguishing the vibrant thriving communities from those that seem to be forever in decline.

Some of our highest need students are in Wilmington and are dealing not only with poverty, but the trauma of violence many of them see every day. Last year, with leadership from members of the City delegation and the support of Senator Sokola and Representative Jaques – we created the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, chaired by Tony Allen.

While many questions remain about the specifics of the Commission's plans, broad consensus exists on this point:

In a state whose courts set the precedent for *Brown vs. Board of Education* more than 60 years ago, but yet never acted to make any real change until told to do so by the federal courts, the time has come to take bold action on behalf of the children of Wilmington.

Forty years is long enough to have school district boundaries that divide neighbors and dilute the ability of the City community to engage in education. District leaders, teachers, parents, students, and advocates all support change.

If a plan comes to you that is clear and responsible, and does not place an extra burden on the residents of Red Clay or any other district, let's make the most of this opportunity to transform education in Wilmington for generations to come.

We recognize that public safety is vital to creating opportunities in communities statewide. We remain vigilant in cracking down on criminals who threaten that safety. But we also recognize that a lock 'em up and throw away the key mentality is not always the best approach. It doesn't make us safer and it's massively expensive.

Through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, we've given courts risk assessment tools to help determine whether a defendant can remain in the community while awaiting trial. And we have supported community-based supervision programs as effective alternatives to incarceration for lower-risk offenders.

More than 95 percent of offenders will eventually leave prison. That's why we have begun to implement a more just and cost-effective criminal justice system that provides treatment and job training to prepare inmates to contribute to our state when released.

We're starting to see results. We have cut our previously rising prison detention population by 18 percent over the past two years.

We're providing job training for hundreds through our culinary arts, automotive, and other programs.

Our I-ADAPT reentry program has connected more than 3,500 inmates to employment support, health care, and housing referrals. Commissioner Coupe will soon release our first comprehensive analysis of that initiative, showing that this approach has reduced short-term recidivism.

Sixteen pregnant women in recovery from addiction, who otherwise would be behind bars, have been diverted to an innovative community-based treatment program called New Expectations. It keeps mothers and their newborns together in a safe environment.

With leadership from members of the General Assembly, we banned the box for thousands of state job applicants. And more than 1,000 ex-offenders can now drive to a job because we abolished a law that stripped non-violent individuals of their driver's licenses. Thank you, Representative J.J. Johnson, for your leadership on both of those initiatives.

All of this represents substantial progress, but we can do better still.

More than 600 inmates are serving mandatory extended sentences because of Delaware's habitual offender law.

Today, a person can receive a mandatory life sentence solely for drug offenses, without any conviction for an act of physical violence. The cost to taxpayers of these automatic sentences and of keeping habitual offenders behind bars for decades is enormous.

Criminal behavior peaks when defendants are in their early 20s. We don't need to sentence all of those offenders to life in prison when many will age out of crime.

We need to give our judges discretion to sentence offenders on a case-by-case basis so that we can focus our limited resources on keeping dangerous offenders off the streets.

And releasing even one long-term inmate who no longer poses a threat to public safety would free up as much bed space as releasing dozens of short term detainees.

I look forward to working with Senator Peterson and Attorney General Denn on reforming sentencing laws and ensuring that those impacted by the current law can have their sentences reviewed.

I also hope the General Assembly will address an important and related civil rights issue. Right now, a person with a felony conviction can vote as soon as his or her probation is complete, but only if he or she has paid all fines and fees. People should pay up, but their ability to participate in democracy should not depend on their ability to pay. Let's join the more than 40 other states that have no financial bar to exercising the most American of rights, the right to vote.

The criminal justice system is one glaring indicator of our country's long struggle with issues around race. About 6 out of 10 inmates in Delaware are persons of color. In some American cities, the percentage is much higher. I won't delve into all of the causes, but we can't avoid the enduring impact of historic racial discrimination.

I support the resolution introduced by Representative Bolden and Senator Henry to have the state officially apologize for slavery. I urge the Senate to join the House in this effort, not because it will right those deplorable wrongs, but because a candid acknowledgement and acceptance of our past is the only way to understand our present and take full responsibility for our future.

The recognition of the discriminatory sins of prior generations also presents an opportunity to reflect on whether we have learned history's lessons – whether we are living up to our core values of opportunity and equality for all people.

Recent national dialogue has challenged us to uphold those values. The suggestion by some that one's eligibility to enter this country should be subject to a religious test represents a dangerous path.

It is my hope that Delaware will lead by example as a place of acceptance and tolerance.

Because while racial and religious tolerance may not always have been our history, that is the future in which we want our children to live.

One way we must make strides towards a more equal society is by ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to build a better life.

We know how important educational opportunities are to that effort, but we don't often discuss other barriers, including numerous obstacles that exist to entering many professions.

Many of our licensing and certification requirements are well-founded. They ensure professionals are trained to keep people safe and earn the public's trust. However, some requirements may no longer be necessary and instead prevent many from pursuing professions in which they would thrive, particularly low-income individuals.

Consider our efforts to reduce recidivism by removing obstacles for ex-offenders to get a job: in some fields, applicants face major obstacles to getting a license because of a criminal record, without full consideration of when the offenses happened and whether they were related to a profession.

Studies show unnecessary licensing laws have led to higher prices for goods and services without improving quality. And they can have unintended consequences.

A couple of years ago, we worked together with leaders in the barber and cosmetology industries, which used to require either paying for 1500 hours of instruction or spending 3000 hours as an apprentice to earn a license. That wasn't right for everyone and kept some good people out of the profession because it was either too expensive or took too long. So we came up with a third option to address those issues.

We should look for other ways to make a similar impact. I will ask Secretary Bullock, along with Senator Poore and the rest of my Cabinet, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of licensing requirements, with input from board representatives and the public.

Just as a law I signed last year subjects state regulations to continuous review, we must make professional licensing regulations instruments of opportunity, not arbitrary and expensive barriers to entry.

Expanding opportunity also means ensuring that all Delawareans can maximize control over their own destinies, and over the destinies of their families.

Delaware has one of the highest unplanned pregnancy rates in the country – 57 percent. When people become parents accidentally, we know the outcomes for them and their children, may be diminished. Mothers and fathers drop out of school and leave the workforce. And too often their children have fewer opportunities.

Research shows that most unplanned pregnancies occur because women are using a method of contraception that isn't very effective for them. There are new methods that are much more effective than the pill – methods preferred by OB-GYNs and endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control – but here in Delaware our healthcare system doesn't make it easy to choose these new methods.

That's why I'm announcing that the state is launching a partnership with the national nonprofit Upstream USA, to train our healthcare providers so that all Delaware women can conveniently access the full range of contraceptive options, including the most effective ones, IUDs and implants, at low or no-cost.

Federal law requires coverage and reimbursement for all methods of contraception anyway, so we don't need to break new ground here, but we do need to ensure that women have access and choices.

I got into politics with the simple idea that we could create an environment where more people could achieve their full potential. I've come to believe that helping women achieve their own goals and become pregnant only when they want to may be one of the most important things we can do in this regard. There are few times when we can create better outcomes, save money, and create opportunity all at once – and this is one of those rare times.

Another significant barrier preventing Delawareans from meeting their potential is substance use disorder. Today we have a far better ability to help them get clean and expect more from their lives because of the tremendous leadership of many people in this room: Secretary Landgraf, Commissioner Coupe, Representatives Keeley and Mulrooney, Senators Henry and Hall-Long, members of Attack Addiction, and my wife Carla.

We have increased access to substance use treatments by as much as 100 percent, and we've made it easier for law enforcement, as well as friends and family, to help victims before it's too late. These efforts are saving lives. In a 24-hour period beginning on Christmas Eve, the Newark Police Department received three reports of people found unresponsive because of an overdose. Master Corporal Marc DiFrancesco responded to all three of those calls. Because of the law that allows police departments to administer the overdose-reversing drug naloxone, Marc heroically saved the lives of all three individuals. Marc, thank you for your extraordinary service.

I ask for your continued support in building on our progress. My recommended budget includes funding for a team of health care professionals who can serve more than 100 of our highest-need patients to provide the intensive services to end their constant cycle of hospitalization, withdrawal, and treatment.

In addition, the Department of Health and Social Services will work more closely with primary care doctors to screen for and identify more cases of substance abuse. By intervening earlier, we can connect Delawareans to treatment sooner, reduce overall costs, and save more families from the anguish of a long battle with addiction.

Master Corporal DiFrancesco's work reflects the incredible commitment by so many Delawareans to serving others. No organization better represents this commitment than our National Guard. This past year, hundreds of members mobilized as part of military operations around the world. We are joined by two members who served abroad this past year: Master Sergeant Kevin Reading, an Aircraft Hydraulics Mechanic in the Air Guard, who was stationed in Kabul, and Chief Warrant Officer Lloyd Massey, a member of Detachment 7, Operational Support Airlift Agency based at the Horn of Africa until recently.

Thank you to all of our service members for everything you do to protect our state and country under the outstanding leadership of General Vavala.

The National Guard and our state suffered a heartbreaking loss this past year with the death of Beau Biden. Every day, the accomplishments of Beau's service touch people in our state – from the military members with whom he served to the vulnerable children for whom he fought tirelessly as our Attorney General. We will help ensure we never forget his incredible legacy when, this spring, we officially name the Major Joseph R. (Beau) Biden III Armed Forces Reserve Center.

We owe our current and former service members more than gratitude. Last year in this speech, I announced an ambitious effort to end veterans' homelessness by January 2016.

Over the course of the past year, we identified 288 homeless veterans. As a result of the commitment of state agencies, non-profits, and volunteers, and under the leadership of Director Ben Addi, I'm proud to say we have helped 284 homeless veterans get off the street.

We must remain as dedicated to this issue as our service men and women are to us.

The challenges we face at times appear intimidating, but time and again, Delawareans rise to the occasion, setting and meeting high expectations. They expect no less from the people they elect to represent them.

The reason that you and I go to work each day is to set ambitious expectations for our state. Sometimes we achieve our goals. And sometimes we must keep working.

Ancient rabbis of the Talmud taught: It is not your obligation to complete the task of perfecting the world, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.

Let us never forget that message or the purpose of our work here: ensuring all Delawareans have the opportunity to make the most of their talents.

I'm proud and humbled by all we have done together over seven years to advance that mission, and by the chance to continue this work for one more year.

Much has changed in Delaware since the first time I delivered the State of the State, but from my first day in office one constant has been the determination with which Delawareans seize the opportunities available to them.

This job and serving with all of you continues to be the honor of my life. It has only strengthened my faith in the good that we can do together. It has only reinforced how important our work is to the security and prosperity of future generations. I look forward to all we can still accomplish.

Thank you. God bless you and God bless the people of Delaware!

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